VAIṢṆAVISM IN MEDIAEVAL MITHILĀ
(C. 1097-1530 A. D.)

by

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Mm. Haraprasad Sastri characterised the religious belief of Vidyāpati as *smārta pañcadevopāsaka.*[1] More recent scholars like Dr. Jayakanta Mishra have pointed out that Vidyāpati wrote in praise of Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Gaṇgā and Śakti. Such an attitude to the deities was not the merit of Vidyāpati alone, but also of other writers of Mediaeval Mithilā. Umāpati paid obeisance to Bhavānī, Hari, and Śiva in the benedictory verses of the *Pārijātaharaṇa* (JBORS. Vol. III. pp. 9-10). Chaṇḍeśvara in his *Kṛtyaratnākara* paid tributes to Gaurī and Śaṅkarī and also to the fish and tortoise incarnations of Viṣṇu.[2] In the *Pūjāratnākara* he described the rituals of Śiva, Durgā, Viṣṇu end Sūrya according to the Tantric rules.[3] The catholicity of Jyotirīśvara, a contemporary of Chaṇḍeśvara, is noticeable in his works, though in the *Dhūrttasamāgama* he described himself as a votary of Śiva. His attitude towards the gods can be judged from the description of a *nāyikā* or heroine in the *Varṇaratnākara*. The heroine was so richly endowed with personal charms and ornaments that one could visualise "as if Kāmadeva came after conquering the world, and she is her banner; as if Indra became thousand-eyed to see her beauty, and Brahmā made himself four-headed ; as if for embracing her one Kṛṣṇa became four-armed."[4] Liberal attitude towards religious sects continued in the Oinivāra age. We have mentioned earlier views about the religious inclinations of the longlived poet Vidyāpati. Attempts of some scholars to identify Vidyāpati as a Śaiva[5] alone

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1. Kīrttilatā (Hrisikesa series No. 9) intro. p. 47. Dr. Subhadra Jha criticising the views of Sastri observed "There is none in Mithilā who has five special gods ; nor is there any passage available on the basis of which we could subscribe to such a view, particularly when we have not found a passage written by the poet in honour of the Sun" (The Songs of Vidyāpati, intro. p. 65).
2. Krityaratnākara (B. I. ed.) verses 1-2.
3. Mitra, R. L. : Notices of Sans. Mss. Vol. VII. No. 2398, pp. 162-163.
4. Varnaratnākara (Asiatic Society of Bengal) Text, p. 4.
5. Prof. Ramanath Jha in his Introduction to Purusaparīkshā, p. 57, writes "if there is any particular manifestation of the Almighty that Vidyāpati adored and paid devotion to, it was beyond doubt, Shiva. If he was anything he was a Shaiva". Similar view also maintained by Rambriksa Benipuri and Sivanandan Thakur.

or Śākta[6] only is a travesty of truth. Vidyāpati composed poems not only on Śiva-Durgā, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa but also on Rāma and Gaṅgā. In one of his lyrics, he made Hari amd Maheśa adore the feet of Durgā.[7] Further, one should also take note of the fact that the Poet on the one hand composed the *Durgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī* and the other, copied the *Bhāgavata*. In his *Śaivasarvasvasāra* he emphasised the greatness of Śiva no doubt, but in the same book he directed the attention of readers towards the unity of Hari and Hara. Vardhamāna and Vāchaspati Miśra, contemporaries of Vidyāpati, also offered salutations to Śiva, Viṣṇu, Rādhā, Hari and Kṛṣṇa in their respective digests. Goṇḍi Miśra, a brother of Vardhamāna, paid obeisance to Śiva and the teen-aged Kṛṣṇa who killed Kaṃsa.[9] Respect for all Hindu deities did not subside even during the reign of Lakṣmīnāth Kaṃsanārāyan,[10] who flourished towards the close of the fifteenth century A. D. Harapati Āgamāchārya, who completed the *Mantrapradīpa* under orders of the above mentioned King, gave details of worship of Śaiva, Sākta and Vaiṣṇava deities.[11]

The liberal outlook of scholars and poets and references to the *pañchopāsanā* do not mean there was absence of devotion to any particular religious sect in Medieaval Mithilā. To some Śiva was the only supreme God. To others, Śakti was the exclusive object of adoration. Vaiṣṇavism alone as a religious persuasion was followed by many Maithilas. Govindadatta Bhairavasiṃha, Viṣṇupurī and Devanāth Sharmā composed the *Govindamānasollāsa*, *Viṣṇupūjākalpalatā*, *Bhaktiratnāvalī* and the *Tantrakaumudī* respectively to satisfy the religious needs of Vaiṣṇavas.

A history of Vaiṣṇava faith and movement in Mithilā is complex. On the one hand, inscriptions discovered in Mithilā are not many in number. On the other hand, no authoritative text on Vaiṣṇava theology and

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Significant is the comment of Dr. Upendra Thākur on such assertions "ई दुराग्रह वहुत आधुनिक विद्वानमे सेहो पाओल जाइछ" (Proc. All-India Maithila Literary Conf. 1963, p. 44)

6. B. P. Shukla in Mādhurī, July, 1936.
7. Mitra-Majumdar ed. of Vidyāpati (Bengali Version) Pada No. 10 ; J. K. Mishra : Hist. of Maithili Literature (abb. hence as HML) p. 158.
8. Mitra, R. L. : op. cit. Vol. VI. No. 1983 : Descriptive Cat. of Mss. in Mithilā, Vol. I. Nos. 367-368.
9. Des. Cat. of Mss. in Mithilā, Vol. I. No. 386,
10, Prof. Radhakrishna Chaudhary in Mithilāk Samksipta Rajnaitik Itihāsa p. 36 assigns his reign period from 1496 A. D. Dr. J. K. Mishra in HML. p, 220 gives his reign period as (?) 1496-1527 A. D. Dr. Upendra Thakur determines the date of his death in 1526 A. D. (Hist. of Mithila, p. 339)
11. Mitra, R. L. : Op. Cit. Vol. VI. No. 2011.

philosophy has a yet been discovered. However, this much is certain that the history of development of Vaiṣṇavism in the two adjacent countries of Bengal and Bihar during the period of our survey did not run on parallel lines. Between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries A. D. such developments occurred in Bengal that there was hardly any link with the Vaiṣṇavism of the Gupta period. By the eleventh century A. D. Kṛṣṇa legend had made definite advance. The Belava inscription of Bhojavarman describes Śrī-Kṛṣṇa as the *mahābhārata-sūtradhāra* and *gopi-śata-kelikāra.* The love of the divine Kṛṣṇa and his consort was humanised in the lyrics of the immortal Jayadeva. By the fourteenth century A. D. the *Kṛṣṇajanma-khaṇḍa* of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, in which the *aiśvarya* and *mādhurya* aspects of Kṛṣṇa worship are prominent gained fairly wide currency in Bengal. From the time of Jayadeva, Kṛṣṇa came to be viewed not only as an incarnation (*avatāra*) but as the veritable supreme deity of many incarnations (*daśakṛtikṛte kṛṣṇāya tubhyam namaḥ*). Rādhā's position among Bengal Vaiṣṇavas had fairly been fixed.

At the beginning of the period under our survey we find that in contrast to Bengal, Mithilā had not severed the link with Vaiṣṇavism of the Gupta period. Śrīdhara, a Minister of Nānyadeva, erected a temple of Viṣṇu in the name of Śrīdhara.[12] During the next three centuries the thoughts of Maithilas centred round Viṣṇu and his incarnations. The opening scene of the *Pārijātaharaṇa* introduces to us Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation who over threw Kaṃsa, relieved the earth from sin and established virtue on earth (JBORS III. pp. 11-12). The author of the last section of the *Pañchaśāyaka* knew of the deep love of Kamalā and Mādhava. Jyotirīśvara claims that so long as the daughter of Himālaya and Kamalā will cling to the breasts of Śiva and Madhava respectively, and enjoy the bliss of love, his achievements will continue to shine brilliantly.[13] Chaṇḍeśvara too did not record any fresh innovation or change in the attitude towards Vaiṣṇavism. He described the worship of Viṣṇu (*Viṣṇupūjāvidhiḥ*) in his *Pūjāratnākara.* In his *Kṛtyaratnākara* one will notice the festivals connected with Viṣṇu and his manifestations. Viṣṇu was worshipped on the 12th *Chaitra Śukla*, *Chaitra Pūrṇimā*, 11th to 13th *Āṣāḍha Śukla* and the day on which the asterism Rohini and Śravaṇa occurred in the month of *Śrāvaṇa.*[14] The incarnations of Viṣṇu, in the forms of

12. JBORS. IX. 303-304 ; Choudhary : Select Ins. of Bihar Text, p. 124.
13. Cat. of Sans. and Prakrit Mss. in the Library of the India Office, Vol. II. Pt. I; No. 5266.
14. Mazumdar, B. P. : Socio-economic Hist. of N. India pp. 275, 277, 283.

Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and the Buddha were objects of special worship on the 12th *Jyaiṣthya Śukla*, 11th-12th *Māgha*, 11th-12th *Phālguna Śukla* and 12th *Srāvaṇa Śukla* respectively.[15] Viṣṇu as Janārdana, Padmanābha, Nārāyaṇa and Keśava were also worshipped on particular dates. A number of days were also sacred to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. A fast was undertaken in honour of Vāsudeva on the 11th *Chaitra Śukla*.[16] Vaiṣṇvas were again asked to fast and recount the life and activities of Vāsudeva when he woke up on the 11th *Kārttika Śukla*.[17] Chaṇḍeśvara refers to some festivals in honour of Kṛṣṇa and hia associates, as for example, on the 7th *Bhādra Śukla* and 8th *Bhādra Kṛṣṇa*, the date on which Kṛṣṇa was born.[18] It may also be pointed out here that Rukmiṇī was worshipped in the month of *Chaitra* and the images of Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā and Devakī were worshipped on the 8th day of the dark-half of the month of *Bhādra*. Viṣṇu that was worshipped along with Saṅkara in the month of *Bhādra* was Keśava clad in yellow clothes.[19] Nowhere do we find Chaṇḍeśvara recommending festivals in honour of that Kṛṣṇa, who is depicted in the 15th chapter of the Kṛṣṇa-janmakhaṇḍa of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*. Further, though he gives a vivid picture of the *Kāma-mahotsava* on the 14th and 15th of the bright-half of *Chaitra*, he quotes the date as sacred to Hari and not to Kṛṣṇa.[20] The sacredness of neither the *Rasapurṇimā* nor the *Holi* are mentioned by our digest-maker.

Worship of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* continued in the days after Chaṇḍeśvara. Gaṇeśvara's son Govindadatta described himself as the servant of Hari (*Harikiṅkara*) in the *maṅgalaśloka* of his *Govindamānasollāsa*.[21] In this book he also describes the worship of Viṣṇu by offer of flowers, gifts, *kīrtana* and the *Śālagrāma-māhātmya*, In the opening verse of the *Bhūparikramā*, Vidyāpati paid obeisance to both Sāmba and Viṣṇu.[22] Misaru Miśra, a contemporary of Vidyāpati and who composed the *Vivādachandra* at the direction of Lakhimā Devī, also paid obeisance to Śrīkaṇṭha and Vaikuṇṭha.[23] King Bhairavasiṁha described himself as devoted to the feet of Hari and salu-

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15. Ibid. pp. 282, 300. 302, 384.
16. Krityaratnākara, p. 128.
17. Ibid. pp. 420, 427.
18. Ibid. pp. 128, 257, 277 respectively.
19. Ibid. pp. 282-283.
20. Ibid. pp. 138 ff.
21. Des. Cat. of Mss. in Mithilā Vol. I., pp. 105 ff. The Baranagar Pātbāri (Calcutta) Ms. is dated Saka 1371/c. 1449 A. D.
22. Ms. preserved also in Bihar Rastrabhasa Parisad.
23 Des. Cat. of Mss. in Mithilā, Vol, I No. 331.

ted Kṛṣṇa along with Sūrya in the *Viṣṇupūjākalpalatā*.[24] Vāchaspati Miśra, a court-paṇḍit of Bhairavasiṃha, also paid obeisance to Viṣṇu, Hari and Vāsudeva in the *Dvaitanirṇaya*, *Āchārachintāmaṇi* and *Pitṛbhakti-taranginī* respectively.[25] The two benedictory verses of his *Vivādachintāmaṇi* run thus : " (1) When at the Assembly of Divine Beings, the Mother of the Three Worlds arose out of the Milky Ocean with a smile on her lotus-like face, and her eyebrows raised high,—God Viṣṇu accepted her with his glances, and with amorous feelings aroused in Himself by the advent of love, His hands moistened with profuse perspiration,—may God thus circumstanced save us from evil......(2) Vāchaspati, having carefully studied the Kalpadruma......with his head bowing to the Lord of Lakṣmī (Viṣṇu) is going to compose the *Vivādachintāmaṇi*".[26] Even during the reign of the last known Oinivāra King Lakṣmīnāth Kaṃsanārāyaṇa, the author of the *Mantrapradīpa* described details of worship of Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Narasiṃha, Puruṣottama, Gopāla, Vālagopāla and Madanagopāla.[27] Here also there is no mention of the Kṛṣṇa of the *gopī* legend. As late as 304 or 394 L. S./1423 or 1513 A. D. Queen Anumati constructed a temple of Mādhava.[28]

A survey of the literature and inscriptions between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries A. D. show that characteristic features of Vaiṣṇavism of the Gupta period were prevalent in Mithilā. Not only the incarnations of Viṣṇu were worshipped but also the *Vyūhavāda* was recognised. Before the time of Vidyāpati the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu were known, because he described Śiva Siṃha as the eleventh *avatāra*, though Umāpati earlier mentioned of King Harisiṃha as the tenth incarnation of Viṣṇu (*Pārijātaharaṇa* in JBORS III, pp. 44,67). Possibly, therefore, Kalkin as the tenth incarnation of Viṣṇu was not popular in the time of Umāpati. It is interesting to note here that in some parts of India, other than Mithilā, the Pāñcharātra Bhāgavatas discontinued the worship of Sāmba. The *Bhaviṣya*, *Varāha* and *Sāmba Purāṇas* do not include Sāmba as one of the *vyūhas*. Of course, Varāhamihira gave the iconographic details of Sāmba and his wife. Vidyāpati's obeisance to Sāmba, son of Kṛṣṇa, shows that Mithilā continued to worship Sāmba even in the fifteenth century. The mention of the worship of Sālagrāma by Govindadatta also reveals the belief of the Maithilas in the different forms of

24. Ibid No. 340.
25. Ibid. pp. 17, 283-285.
26. Vivādachintāmani, trans. by G. N. Jha, GOS. No. XCIV, p. 1.
27. Mitra, R. L. : Op. cit. No. 2011 Mantrapradīpa patalas 12 to 14,
28. JBRS. XL (1954) p, 347 ff.

Pañcharātra worship. Thus the enumeration of Vaiṣṇava festivals and the knowledge of the incarnations and emanatory forms of Viṣṇu in the books, written before and after Vidyāpati, clearly prove the inaccuracy of the statement of Dr. Subhadra Jha that "we do not know if there were Vaiṣṇavas living before the time of Vidyāpati there."[29]

A closer study of the vast literature of Mithilā also reveals that the older form of Vaiṣṇavism was awaiting further developments in the Karṇāṭa period. Even before the time of Chaṇḍeśvara, Nrisiṃha Ṭhākur spoke of Narasiṃha (Nṛsiṃha) sleeping at the *vaṁśīvaṭa* and holding a *muralī* (flute) in his hands.[30] Such an image of Kṛṣṇa must have been the influence of the *Bhāgavata.* The reasons for the attraction for the youthful Kṛṣṇa are not too difficult to interpret. Maithilas may have been tired of self-satisfied formalism of the orthodox *smārta* system. The prescription of fixed duties and ceremonies in the *Smṛtis* probably seemed mechanical and "hardly encouraged any exhibition of personal devotional fervour or any inner sensibility for morality or religion."[31] Contemporary religious literature and philosophy like the speculative *bhakti* of the *Bhagavad-gītā* may not have satisfied the yearning of the learned people of Mithilā. The *Harivaṁśa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also did not contribute to the emergence of the passionate love for the deity. Consequently these people living sometime beyond the tenth or eleventh century A. D. were drawn towards the *Bhāgavata*. In the words of Dr. S. K. De, the merits of the *Bhāgavata* are "it asserts the rights of the emotional and the aesthetic in human nature and appeals to the exceedingly familiar and authentic intensity of feelings and sentiments. It transfigures the mighty sex-impulse into a passionate religious emotion...The essential truth of its glorification of Vṛndāvanalīlā lies in this appeal for a more emotional religion and in its protest against the hard intellectuality of doctrines and dogmas."[32] Moreover, the ideas of other contemporary religious sects of Mithilā did not militate against some of the views propounded in the *Bhāgavata*. Tāntricism exalted the female principle. The *Harivaṁsa* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* were influenced by *Tantra*. Dr. S. Chattopadhyaya observes : "This Viṣṇu Purāṇa contains the story of *yoga-māyā* showing

29. Jha, Subhadra : The Songs of Vidyāpati, p. 9. Dr. Upendra Thakur (Proc. All-India Maithi Literary Conf. Vol. III. 1963, pp. 41-42) observes that the discovery of images of Visnu, Kamalāditya, Laksmi Narayan, Garuda etc. in Mithilā show that Maithilas were thoroughly acquianted with philosophy of vaisnavas by the 12th cent. p. 12.

30. Mitra, R. L : Op. cit. No. 1836; Des. Cal. of Mss. in Mithilā, Vol. I., p. 270.

31. De, S. K : Vaisnava Faith and Movement, p. 23.

32. Ibid. p. 5.

how the followers of the sub-sect were gradually making alliance with the Tantric mother-cult, but in it at the same time there are some erotic touches in the *Hallisa* sport" (*Evolution of Theistic Sects in Ancient India*, p. 153). The erotic tendencies in Sahajiya and Natha cults may have also fashioned the minds of the people in accepting the erotico-mystic ideas of the *Bhāgavata*. Thus religious and philosophical outlook of non-Vaiṣṇava sects created an atmosphere where the popularity of the *Bhāgavata* did not look like the success of a hostile religious literature.

Theme of the *Bhāgavata* formed the subject-matter of books written in mediæval Mithilā. We shall take into account three writers here. These are Viṣṇupurī, Vidyāpati and Raghupati Upādhyāya. Viṣṇupurī selected many passages of *Śrīmad-bhāgavata* in thirteen strings in his *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*.[33] 401 verses of *Bhāgavata* are grouped together in 13 chapters. entitled : *bhaktisāmānyam, satasaṅgaḥ, nava-vidhā bhakti, śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam, padasevanam, archaṇam, vandanam, dāsyam, sakhyam, ātmanivedanam* and *śaraṇāgatiḥ*. Only 2 verses in the third and fifth chapters of the work are quoted from the *Haribhakti-sudhodaya*. While there is no doubt about the influence of Viṣṇupurī in Eastern India, scholars are divided in their opinions about his date, his *guru* and his religious sect. On the basis of writings of Kavikarṇapura, Mr. B. N. Krisnamurti Sarma held that Viṣṇupurī was a disciple of Jayadhvaja.[34] Both Mr. Amar Nath Ray and Dr. S. K. De did not agree with the view.[35] On the basis of the colophon in most of the commentaries preserved in the Dacca University, notices about the *Bhaktiratnāvalī* in the Catalogues prepared by Eggeling, and Rajendralal Mitra, Dr. S. K. De holds that Viṣṇupurī's *guru* was Puruṣottama.[36] Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar points out Jayadharma as the *guru* of Viṣṇupurī.[37] In this connection it is worthy of note that the date of the colophon in the manuscripts of *Bhaktiratnāvalī* is not the same in all cases. Aufrecht stated 1634 A. D. as the date of the composition of the colophon. H. P. Sastri suggested 1555 Śaka 1633 A. D. as the date. Eggeling found it to be 1595 A. D. Dr. S. K. De avoids the suggestion of a date and observes "it would seem, therefore, that any chronological

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33. Sacred Book of the Hindu series, Allahabad, 1912; Bengali edition by Balaichand Gosvami and Atulkrisna Gosvami, Cal. CE 419.
34. Indian Culture, Vol. IV. pp. 430-31.
35. Indian Cul. Vol. V. p. 102.
36. Ind. Cul. Vol. V. p. 199 ; De. S. K : Vaisnava Faith and Movement, p. 14 fn.
37. Majumdar, B. B : Chaitanya Chariter Upādān (2nd. ed.) p. 689.

conclusion based on these verses would be extremly doubtful."[38] In these circumstances it is obvious that there would be no unanimity amongst scholars about the date of Viṣṇupurī. Dr. S. K. De assigns him to a period much earlier than Chaitanya.[39] Prof. Ramanath Jha suggests 1425 A. D, as the date of birth of Viṣṇupurī.[40] Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar makes him a contemporary of Chaitanya on the evidence of Jayānanda, Lochana, Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Priyādāsa's commentary on the Bhaktamāla, Ramcharan Thākur's Assamese work on Śaṅkara and Buchanan's Purnea Report.[41] Carpenter had earlier pointed out, though on slender evidence, that Viṣṇupurī met Chaitanya.[42] We may, however, suggest the upper and lower limits of the date of Viṣṇupurī. He must have flourished after 1400 A. D. and before 1541 A. D. On the one hand, in his *Kāntimālā* he apologized for any departure from the commentaries of Śrīdhara. As Śrīdhara referers to Vopadeva, he could not have flourished before 1300 A. D. On the other hand, the *Padyāvalī* of Rūpa Goswāmin contains two verses of Viṣṇupurī on the *bhajana-māhātmya*.[43] Though the date of the composition of the *Padyāvalī* is not known, yet the mention of this anthology in the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, composed in Śaka 1463 (1541 A. D.) shows that the *Padyāvalī* must have been compiled before the above mentioned date. As regards the sect to which Viṣṇupurī belonged, there is hardly any justification to differ from the views of Dr. S. K. De. The land in which he was born and his own statement are clear evidence of Viṣṇupurī being an Advaita Vedāntin. Mithilā was famous for the cultivation of Advaita Vedānta much before the time of Viṣṇupurī. We have seen earlier that he begged apology for any departure from the commentaries of the *Bhāgawata* by Śrīdhara. In the *Kāntimālā*, Viṣṇupurī wrote : *atra śrīdhara-sat'amoktilikhane nyūnādhikaṃ yad bhavet | tat kṣan'uṃ*

38. Ind. Cul. Vol. V. p. 199.
39. "Visnupuri......flourished at a period much earlier than that of Chaitanya" (Padyāvali. ed. S. K. De, p. 232).
40. 12th All-India Oriental Conf. pp. 1-15. Cf. Mishra, J. K : Op. cit. p-208, who determines his age as 15th century.
41. Chaitanya-chariter-upādāna (2nd. ed.), p. 689. Manoranjan Shastri assigns the date of Visnupuri as between 1440 and 1520 A.D. (IHQ. vol. 36 (1960) p. 111). Relying more on Assamese history and tradition, he observes : "According to Assamese tradition recorded in the biographies of Sankaradeva, Bhaktiratnavali of Visnupuri came to Assam when Sankaradeva completed his compilation of Bhaktiratnākara. We have been able to trace a few passages from Kāntimālā written by Visnupuri himself, quoted in the Bhaktiratnākara."
42. Carpenter : Theism in Mediaeval India, p. 422.
43. Padyāvali, ed. S. K. De Nos. 9 and 10, pp. 4-5.

sudhiyo'rhata sva-rachanā-lubdhasya me chāpalam ॥ Śrīdhara believed that Advaita can be realised through his devotion to Nṛsiṁha. In other words, he preached *bhakti* as the best means of *Advaita mukti*. One of the followers of Śrīdhara was our Viṣṇupurī, an Advait ascetic. Further, the title of Purī indicates that he belonged to the Dasanāmi order of Śaṅkarite Sannyāsins. Farquhar, Glasenapp, B. N. Krishnamurti Sarma and Syamsundara Das wrongly described Visṇupurī as a Mādhva ascetic.[44] Mr. Sarma went to the length of stating that "most probably it was this Visṇupurī who was the father of the Bhakti movement in the North and the teachers Laksmīpati, Mādhavendra Purī and Īśvara were descended from him and of these Īśvara Purí was probably contemporaneous with Vyāsatīrtha." Such a statement is not only inaccurate but also militates against numerous texts on Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and biographies of Chaitanya.[45]

Vidyāpati was well acquainted with thc *Bhāgavata*. He himself copied a manuscript of the *Bhāgavata* sometime in 309 L. S./1428 A. D. at Rajabanauli.[46] He also composed a number of lyrics on the divine Kṛṣṇa, which show his knowledge of the above mentioned sacred text. In recent years Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar and Dr. Subhadra Jha have tried to differentiate the erotic and Vaiṣṇava hymns of the Poet.[47] The latter rightly observes "Vidyāpati's erotic songs are sometimes secular and sometimes devotional......It is again noteworthy that none of the poems in the N. Ms. in which Mādhava refers decidedly to the Divine Being the name of any other patrons of the poet occur." We should also bear in mind that when the Poet wrote about the divine Kṛṣṇa or Mādhava, it does not necessarily follow that Vidyāpati was a Vaiṣṇava. It is also not necessary for us to ascribe the motives of the copying of the *Bhāgavata*, as have been done by some scholars. Vidyāpati was essentially a Poet.

44. Farquhar : An outline of the Religious Literature of India, pp. 229, 302, 375; Glasenapp : Madhva's Philosophie des Visnu, Glaubens, p. 61; B. N. K. Sarma : Ind. Cul. Vol. IV; Syamsundara Das : Hindi Bhasa aur Sahitya.

45. S. K. De : Vaisnava Faith, p. 12 ff.; B. B. Majumdar : Chaitanya Chariter Upādāna p. 543 ff.

46. The date 309 L. S. suggested by Dr. J. K. Misra and Prof. Ramanath Jha (HML. Vol. I. pp. 141 and 185) accepted by Mitra-Majumdar: Vidyāpati pp. 49, 57 and Dr. Umesh Misra : Vidyāpati Thakur p. 142. But in Intro. pp. 23-24 of the Vidyāpati Padāvali published by the Rastrabhasa Parisad, Bihar, the date is 299 L. S./ 1418 A. D. Dr. Subhadra Jha suggests the date of copying as between 1415 and 1429 A. D.

47. Bimanbehari Majumdar's articles in the Sahitya Parisat Patrika, B. S. 1363 pp. 153-166, 233-248. Subhadra Jha : The Songs of Vidyāpati, pp. 187-193.

Just as we find poems on different religious faiths by R. N. Tagore, so Vidyāpati wrote on diverse religious themes. Vidyāpati's greatness as a poet would be dwarfed if we classify him as a narrow sectarian, be it Śaiva, Śākta or Vaiṣṇava. Being a learned scholar he could catch the predominant sentiments of any religion.

The *Padyāvalī* contains as many as 6 couplets of Raghupati Upādhyāya.[48] Amongst these, verses Nos. 98 and 300 refer to the *gopīs*. Incidentally it may be mentioned here thut according to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja *Chaitanyacharitāmṛta, Madhya* xix. 92-105), Raghupati and Chaitanya had a meeting at Benaras. If Jayānanda is to be believed Paramānanda Purī, another Tirhut saintly scholar, who met Chaitanya, composed the *Govinda-vijaya*.[49] Uptil now, no manuscript of this work has been discovered.

Depiction of the character of the divine Kṛṣṇa in the literature of Mithilā was not only based on the *Bhāgavata* but also on the *Gītagovinda*. Long before Vidyāpati, one may trace the influence of Jayadeva on Umāpati, author of the *Pārijātaharaṇa*. Though the frame of the drama was taken from the *Harivaṁśa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata*, yet verses on the lamentation of the lady on account of the association with Mādhava betray knowledge of the *Gītagovinda*.[50] We may have doubts about Umāpati's indebtedness to Jayadeva, but, there is unmistakable influence of Jayadeva on Vidyāpati. Many words and word-pictures of Jayadeva are traceable in the *padas* of Vidyāpati. We are told by the former that Mādhava pleaded Anaṅga not to punish him by wrongly identifying him with Śiva (*Gītagovinda* III. 11). Almost the same type of requests to Anaṅga are made by Rādhā in one of the *padas* of Vidyāpati (Mitra-Majumdar ed. *Pada* No. 245). Both the poets refer to the use of the flute by Kṛṣṇa for beckoning Rādhā. Both of them depicted the intense love of Rādhā by stating that Rādā believed herself to be Mādhava (*Gīta*. VI. 5 and Vidyāpati *Pada* No. 75). She unceasingly remembered Kṛṣṇa (*Gīta*. IV. 17 and Vidyāpati's *ahanisa-japa tuo nāma*). The element of erotics is prominent in both the poets. It is the presence of *śṛṅgāra-rasa* that has led scholars from the time of H. P. Sastri to S. K. De to believe that neither Jayadeva nor Vidyāpati composed verses in accordance with any particular Vaiṣṇava dogmatics.

48. Padyāvali Nos. 82, 87, 97, 98, 126 and 300.
49. Chaitanyamangala p. 3; Majumdar, B.B : Chaitanya Chariter Upādāna pp. 570,658.
50. JBORS, vol. III. (1917) song No. 30, English trans, in pp. 62-63. For a discussion of the date of Umāpati vide Prof. R.K. Choudhary's article in JBRS. XLIII (1957)p.42.

Though Vidyāpati was indebted to Jayadeva yet the former did not transpose the thoughts of the latter in Maithili language. While composing devotional lyrics on Kṛṣṇa, he utilised his knowledge of Vaiṣṇava scriptures. In his lyrics Kṛṣṇa was not only a son of Nanda, but also Hari, Mādhava, and the incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa is also described as "a cowherd of the family of the Yadus" (S. Jha : *Pada* No. 90; Mitra-Maj. No. 407). Had the Poet not recognised the divinity of Kṛṣṇa, he would not have drawn the attention of people towards the *aiśvarya* of Kṛṣṇa. He depicted four hands of Murāri-Kṛṣṇa. In one of the lyrics he wrote "This Kṛṣṇa has four hands : with one he pulls the hairs, with the second he presses the neck, the third he puts over the temple of the cheecks and with the fourth he touches the nipples of the breasts."[51] It was possibly after the *Bhāgavata* that he referred to the *mādhurya* aspect of Kṛṣṇa-worship and the rich and sensuous image of Rādhā in his lyrics. The *Bhāgavata* nowhere mentions of Rādhā. It is unlikely that Vallabhāchārya and Nimbārka who believed in Rādhā as the *Sakti* of Kṛṣṇa, influencing the Maithilas at such an early date. Their activities were confined till about the 15th century in Western India and Vṛndāvana. Whatever might have been the source of inspiration, Vidyāpati depicted Kṛṣṇa as a repository of qualities.[52]

Vidyāpati's lyrics show that the *gopīs* and Rādhā were actuated by the *mādhurya* aspect of Kṛṣṇa-worship. Whereas *aiśvarya* of a person produces fear, confusion and respect, *mādhurya*, according to Dr. S. K. De, "is the source of love in its sweet and melting quality."[53] In a *pada* we read the relation of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. "He tends cows and resides in Gokula; besides, he cracks jokes with cowherds... O lady, why do you speak for (my) union with Kṛṣṇa, with him, who has his sports with cowherdesses?"[54] But neither the *gopīs* nor Rādhā were motivated by mundane feelings in their attitude towards Kṛṣṇa. Though Vidyāpati sang of the sylvan delights of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (*Madhusūdana Rādhā vana vihāra*),[55] yet his Rādhā admitted the divinity of Kṛṣṇa. In one of the lyrics, preserved in Nepal, we are told, of the views of the lady who said "Where is the god Dāmodara, he that puts on a garland of lotuses, where am I, a foolish cowherd woman."[56]

51. Jha, Subhadra : The Songs of Vidyāpati, Intro. p. 188.
52. Ibid. Text. No. 69, p. 71.
53. De, S. K : Vaisnava faith and movement, p. 303.
54. Jha, S : Op. cit. Text. No. 123; Mitra-Maj. Text No. 346.
55. Jha, S. : Op. cit. Text. Nos. 260-261. : Mitra-Maj. Text Nos. 477 and 473.
56. Jha, S : Op. cit. Text. No. 14.

Rādhā's love was supersensuous. She was so much overwhelmed on seeing Kṛṣṇa that "even my own heart seemed to be of another person. In all the directions I saw Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa alone."[57] She always looked for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Her love was not for self-satisfaction nor actuated by the *aiśvarya* of Kṛṣṇa. In several *Padas*, we are informed that she wished for the welfare of Kṛṣṇa, wherever he may have been residing.[58] Of course, we should remember here that Vidyāpati nowhere identified Rādhā as the *hlādinī mahāśakti* of Tantras or as *nityasiddhā*, as has been described by Rūpa Gosvāmin. Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar, however, describes Rādhā of Vidyāpati as the *parāśakti* of Kṛṣṇa.[59]

Mādhurya aspect of Kṛṣṇaworship is portrayed by Vidyāpati in the mystico-erotic relationship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. At the same time Vidyāpati acquainted his readers with his ideas about the divinity of Kṛṣṇa. He described himself as a *rasavindaka, rasavinodaka* and *rasika* in one of his lyrics.[60] Both in the *Bhāgavata* I. 3 and *Gītagovinda* IX. 9 and XII. 9 the believers in the *Madhura-rasa* are described as *rasika*. Like the later Vaiṣnvas who believed in the eternity of the erotic sports of Vṛndāvana, Vidyāpati too had faith in the constant association of Kṛṣṇa with Vṛndāvana. In one of his poems, he soothed the lamenting *gopīs* and Rādhā on account of departure of Kṛṣṇa for Mathurā by suggesting that Kṛṣṇa can never leave Vṛndāvana, the lord must be hiding himself somewhere in the locality (Vṛndāvana).[61] In a *pada*, not current in Mithilā, Vidyāpati describes the *Rāsa-līlā*[62] possibly after the scene described in the *Bhāgavata*.

Govindadāsa, a poet who flourished in the time of Kaṁsanārāyaṇa, paid glowing tributes to the contribution of Vidyāpati to Vaiṣṇavism. In the words of Dr. Jha, Govindadāsa wrote : "Glorious is the wise poet, Vidyāpati, whose sweet songs, dealing with the exploits of Govinda and Gorī (Rādhā) has captivated the heart of the world,"[63] We should note here that though Vidyāpati recorded some advance in Vaiṣṇava theology and philosophy, yet he was not a precursor of the six Gosvāmins of Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism or the *puṣṭimarga* of Vallabhāchārya. We have already seen that he did not depict Rādhā as the *hlādinī* or blissful

57. Jha, S. Text. No. 66; Mitra-Maj. Text. No. 240; Rastrabhasa Parisad : Vidyāpati Padāvali No. 67, p. 91 Text.
58. Mitra-Maj. Pada Nos. 514, 522 and 546.
59. Sahitya Parisat Patrika, B. S. 1363, p. 245.
60. Mitra-Maj. Pada No. 332.
61. Ibid. Pada No. 733.
62. Ibid. Pada No. 110.
63. Jha, S ; Op. cit. Intro. p. 189.

svarūpā-śakti of Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, in two of his *Padas*, we find Kṛṣṇa going for *abhisāra* (Mitra-Maj. *Pada* Nos. 85 and 87). Neither in the *Bhāgavata* nor in the books of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, we find such a role of Kṛṣṇa. It is always Rādhā and not Kṛṣṇa, who proceeds on a ***abhisāra.*** Further, the Poet at times made Rādhā say that she would find it difficult to observe her chastity owing to the continued and prolonged absence of Kṛṣṇa and her sufferings were to due to her actions in the previous birth (Mitra-Maj. *Pada* Nos. 524,554 and 575). Such utterings of Rādhā cannot be found in the sacred texts of orthodox Vaiṣṇavas. The speeches of and attitude of Rādhā in Vidyāpati's lyrics show that Vidyāpati could never have been influenced by the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa.* Kṛṣṇa's *abhisāra* and depiction of Rādhā by Vidyāpati show that there is no justification in the view of Dr. Jaya Kanta Mishra that Vidyāpati was influenced by the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa.*[64]

Madhura aspect of Kṛṣṇa worship was the theme of a number of poems composed by poets or poetess who were contemporaries or near contemporaries of Vidyāpati. Amṛtakara and Jīvanātha were such poets. The former, in one of his lyrics, described the love of the divine Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the words of the concluding line are "harken thou the life history of the Lord of Mathurā and Rādhā."[65] Vardhamāna, the legist, was also influenced by the *madhura rasa.* In the opening verse of the *Daṇḍaviveka* he wrote : "may that Hari as Gopāla protect you, who, while moving with Rādhā in forest failed to wipe out the sweat on the cheeks of Rādhā, because, Rādhā's sweat increased instead of lessening, due to the touch of the fingers of Kṛṣṇa."[66] Probably, the transcendental character of the amorous relationship of Rādhā-Kṛsṇa is best expressed in a poem ascribed to Chandrakalā, daughter-in-law of Vidyāpati, in Lochana's *Rāgataraṅgiṇī.* Here we find the Poetess requesting Rādhā to surrender herself to Mādhava.[67]

Maithila poets who lived in the post-Vidyāpati age continued the tradition of composing poems on the divine love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. King Lakhimīnātha Kaṁsanārāyaṇa, in one of his poems, paid obeisance to Kṛṣṇa as Mādhava and Yadunandana. In another poem, Rādhā became a victim of Cupid as soon as Kṛṣṇa looked askance at her.[68] The best

64. Mishra, J. K : Op cit. Vol. I. pp. 161 "we cannot absolutely rule out the possibility of his having access to Brahma-Vaivarta before (?) he read the Bhāgavata".

65. Rāgatarangini ed. Baladeva Misra, Darbhanga, p. 85.

66. Dandaviveka, GOS No. LII. p. 1.

67. Rāgatarangini, pp. 53-54

68. Ibid. p. 77.

instance of the royal poet's belief in the *mādhurya* aspect is when Rādhā yearned for the return of Murāri from Mathurā.[69] Govindadāsa, a poet of the court of Kaṁsanārāyaṇa, vividly describes the intensity of the love of Rādhā. On hearing the sound of the flute, she found it difficult to sell the milk and fell down in the *kadamba* forest on the banks of the river Yamunā.[70] In another poem Rādhā's *abhisā a* is described. Her dalliance with Mādhava has been declared as the successful termination of yearning covering hundred cycles of Birth.[71] The eretico-mystic devotion of Kṛṣṇa is also noticeable in five verses of unknown Maithila poets quoted in the *Padyāvalī* of Rūpa Gosvāmin.[72] The noble sentiment of fondness and sweet feelings or *madhura rasa* is prominent in two verses, on the effect of the flute and the description of Kṛṣṇa as an adolescent (*kiśora*).

Thus before the advent of Vidyāpati the Vaiṣṇavas of Mithilā worshipped the incarnations of Viṣṇu and the aniconic symbol. Kṛṣṇa was recognised as the youthful hero playing flute and having dalliance with the *gopīs*. Vidyāpati popularised the role of Kṛṣṇa-Mādhava as depicted in the *Bhāgavata* and the *Gītagovinda*. Vidyāpati and his successors depicted Kṛṣṇa as the adolescent divine hero who not only had dalliance with Rādhā but repeated the sport with other cowherdesses of Vṛndāvana.[73] In the *Bhāgavata* Kṛṣṇa performed the *Rāsa* with all the ladies of Vraja. In the *Giatgovinda* too, Rādhā was his beloved, though Kṛṣṇa had dalliance with all other enchanted married ladies "(*haririha mugdhavadhunikare vilāsinī vilasati kelipare*" *Gītagavinda* I. 40). Inspite of a faith in the *Bhāgavata* there were fundamental differences between Vidyāpati's Kṛṣṇa and *Bhāgavata's* Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, Vidyāpati did not compose any lyric on *goṣṭha*, *kalahāntaritā* and *premavaicitty* . It may also be pointed out here that Umāpati, earlier than Vidyāpati, recognised the sport of Kṛṣṇa with 16,000 maids. The Poet and dramatist also had no delusion about the divinity of Kṛṣṇa, who could multiply himself.[74] Till the end of the Oinivāra dynasty nowhere do we find reference to the

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69 Mitra-Maj. Op cit., p. 579; N. Gupta, No. 708.

70 Rāgatarangini, p. 100. Wrongly ascribed to Vidyāpati by Prof. Desaraj Singh Bhati and J. Joshi in Vidyāpati aur unki Padāvali, p. 250.

71. Rāgatarangini, p 101.

72 Padyāvali Nos. 306, 316, 329, 338 and 339. Of these 316, 338 and 339 are also ascribed to Raghupati Upadhyaya in some manuscripts.

73. Cf. Kirttipatākā quoted in J K Mishra : Hist. of Maithili Lit. Vol I. p. 152.

74. Pārijātaharana in JBORS. III. Text p. 13 and Eng. trans. p. 49.
जदुनाथ साथ बिहार हरखित सहस सोड़स नायिका ।

mañjarī method of devotional worship or the remembrance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *aṣṭakālīya līlā* in the poems composed in Mithilā. In Mithilā neither Vidyāpati nor any other poet conceived Rādhā as the intrinsic energy of Kṛṣṇa. They did not think it proper to conceive themselves as Rādhās and then worship Kṛṣṇa. The absence of *Rādhā-bhāva* in Mithilā was probably due to the link with the characteristic developments in Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta age and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

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